

REPRESENTATIVE BUSSE NUTLEY

During a career that has included both public and private employment, Busse Nutley has developed significant public policy initiatives and has managed service delivery organizations in the state of Washington. Prior to her appointment as a member of the Washington State Personnel Appeals Board, Busse was director of the Washington State Office of Community Development. She was elected as a state legislator and a county commissioner, mediated public policy issues, served as a land use planner for both public and private interests, and operated consulting businesses. Busse was co-author of the state's landmark Growth Management Act of 1990, created Washington's first legislative Housing Committee, and served as chair of the Washington State Housing Finance Commission.

Busse was born and raised in the Yakima Valley, graduated from the University of Washington with a bachelor of arts degree in urban planning, and lived in Vancouver before moving to Olympia in 1999.



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Tape 1, Side 1

Rita R. Robison: This interview with Busse Nutley is about the history of Washington State's Growth Management Act (GMA). The date is August 1, 2005, and the interview is taking place at the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) in Olympia. My name is Rita R. Robison, and I will be interviewing Busse Nutley today.

Rita: What interest did you have in land use planning and growth management before its passage in 1990?

Busse Nutley: Well, actually, I'm an urban planner by trade. I got a degree from the University of Washington in the early 1970s and I worked in Clark County in that capacity for a number of years. I worked for the regional planning agency there and I worked for the local homebuilders association. And after that I went into the Legislature, so I had background from both the public and private side. I also had a consulting business of my own, briefly.

Rita: When did you start thinking about growth management?

Busse: I started thinking about it when Joe King announced to me that he wanted to pass growth management because he had sat in his car on the freeway and he was tired of doing that in Seattle traffic. I was not happy about it because I had long had discussions with other planners about whether the state should have a role in planning or whether it should be up to local government.

I'll give you a little more history there—the idea really started coming out of the work to deal with local government called the Local Governance Study Commission. When I was a freshman in the Legislature in 1985 that bill was passed. It was a 21-member group from every possible local government entity that worked

for two-and-a-half years on what would be a way to redo local government to make it work better. There were a number of bills that came out of that. Essentially not much happened in terms of actual legislation, but it sort of set the stage for the possibility of growth management. So, when Joe got tired of sitting in traffic—and he absolutely didn't have any idea what he was talking about in terms of having legislation for growth management—he didn't understand at that moment how difficult it was going to be. He just thought it was a good idea from a non-planner's point of view.

Rita: What role did you play in the passage of the Growth Management Act?

Busse: Well, I was involved quite a bit in it because Joe was my seatmate—two people are elected from each district—we were both from the 49th District. So, I'm sure that when you interview him he will remember the dinner he had at my house with my husband and me. According to him, I ending up yelling at him that I didn't think this was really a good idea to do. Being a local government person, I just didn't like the idea of having statewide land use planning. I was concerned about how it was going to turn out. Yet at the same time there was an initiative being discussed from the environmental side, and that proposal was definitely state-controlled. Joe is a very practical politician and he realized that something was going to happen and it was a real opportunity for something to be well thought out, in a more centrist point of view. And I eventually had to admit that I agreed with that.

So, when we started the session in 1990 there was a lot of politics going for it, the timing was right—in the Puget Sound regions, mostly. In the rest of the state it was more of a long shot, but even in Clark County there was a core of support. It was a very fast growing area and also has the politics of the Oregon planning effort there, including a Vancouver urban growth boundary that was already over 15 years old in 1990. There were a lot of people that came to Clark County who didn't like Oregon-style land use planning and that was important to understand. It was a real big piece of the politics to stay away from the Oregon-style, or state-controlled, to the extent we could, because there was so much organized opposition to that. So, when the session started people were fairly enthusiastic. The Democrats in the House [of Representatives] were in firm control of that side of the building and people had been hearing about it for a long time and things started falling in place.

I was chair of the Housing Committee so we needed to work on that piece. I had long been involved in the Local Government Committee, which Mary Margaret Haugen was chair of and I'd been vice-chair of it before I became chair of the Housing Committee. But those two committees really did work together quite a bit anyway. We moved through the first half of the session with solid planning bills from all the six major committees.

Rita: And women chaired all those committees. Was that unusual and did that make the dynamic any different and how did they work together?

Busse: It wasn't unusual because we just thought that was the way things should be [laughter]. It was unusual from the outside because the number of women in the Legislature at that time was growing and so having women as chairs was unusual. It was interesting because the six women who were in charge of the six committees—Local Government, Housing, Environmental Affairs, Transportation, Natural Resources, and Trade and Economic Development—happened to be six of the most opinionated women in the House [laughter]. None of us took anything Joe King had to say easily. We were a challenge to him and he seemed to enjoy every minute of it, so it was a lot of fun actually.

Rita: Can you tell us anything about Ruth Fisher's role?

Busse: Oh yeah. Well, she was chair of Transportation and the transportation piece was actually the only piece that was finished. It was the easiest part because the Senate and the House had worked together on transportation for years and years at that time. They had a joint staff and, in fact, that was put in place pretty closely to its final outcome in the original House version. There was very little that was ever changed because the Senate had agreed to that essentially at the very beginning.

So, Ruth's role was mostly to think that we were crazy when we would change anything because from a transportation standpoint it was done; it was finished, and why we would change anything anywhere else—Ruth being from a very urban Tacoma district and being Ruth, who saw things in a very black-and-white point of view. It was a lot of fun because she was a good, strong advocate of doing the right thing. And she always had great humor about the whole thing. She was fun to work with, but we really didn't need to work with her that much because she did her piece and it was done.

Rita: So, what about the name Steel Magnolias as this group came to be called? Do you know how that name came up?

Busse: Well, the movie, the "Steel Magnolias" with Shirley MacLaine—and Julia Roberts was just a brand new actress at that time—had just come out. And it was Joe King who was trying to explain why it was tough working with the six women that he had as his chairs, and so he named us the Steel Magnolias and it stuck right away. So, we had a good time with it.

Rita: You talked about in your area there was knowledge of the Oregon law and some comments about people wanting something different. So, what about other models? Were there other models from other states that were used?

Busse: Well, we were extremely concerned with the basic philosophy—mostly Mary Margaret and I—were extremely concerned with the basic philosophy having come out of the Local Governance Study Commission. And we absolutely insisted that it be a bottom-up rather than a top-down model. So, we were looking at Florida—I forget the other state—Georgia I think. Anyway, Florida was more of a bottom-up state, but I can't remember now.

So, Joe sent Tom Campbell back East to do a lot of research and he really provided all the technical information. I was the only planner who was a member of the Conference Committee where it really got interesting and that's where the bill really took shape. But on the House side there were just a lot of people involved in the original configuration for trying to set the standard, and, hopefully, by the time the Senate got involved it wouldn't be destroyed too much.

Rita: Tell us the story about the Conference Committee. What went on there?

Busse: Well, after Joe and [Senate Majority Leader] Jeannette Hayner agreed that there would be a bill—and she was excellent to work with and she and Joe were a great team. She sent her people into the Conference Committee telling them there would be a bill, but she didn't necessarily tell us it was going to be easy because we still needed to deal with some hardcore, antigrowth management people. Growth management is a very hard thing for a lot of people to buy into because it had been so easy for people to deal with the rules locally and many of these things were really hard for people to digest. But when it came right down to it, we had to have this Conference Committee and I said to Joe that I wanted to be on it. We had a long discussion about whether it was good politics to be on it because it would be very, very difficult with my planning background to handle

the politics. In fact, I've never completely recovered from the negative politics of growth management.

I've always gotten criticism and little of the praise for the bill, which is interesting. And I think that's probably because I had to take the lead on much of the floor debate since I knew technically what it did. There were two other planners in the House—Dennis Braddock and Bill Smitherman—but neither one of them had anything to do with it at all. So, when technical questions would arise I was the only one who really understood the nuances and could have a floor response to arguments against provisions. Because I was a long-range planner I was really interested in the big picture, but the bill caused me to have to deal with minutiae that was not really something that I had spent a lot of time with as a professional planner.

Back to the Conference Committee. Maria Cantwell and I were the Democrats from the House. John Betrozoff was the Republican from the House. In the Senate it was Senator Bob McCaslin, Senator Neil Amondson, Republicans, and Senator Larry Vognild for the Democrats. So, it was very partisan from the very beginning and it was sometimes very nasty and very uncomfortable. But it was the most interesting 22 days of my life. Absolutely, bar none. It was 22 straight days of the most intensive negotiation of public policy, and it was fascinating from the very beginning to the very end even though it was an incredible amount of work.

At one point I carried a little Post-It note that I wrote on in the middle of the night at home, with some aspect of the bill that I wanted to deal with. I carried it around in my pocket. I have no idea what the issue was anymore, but it was the last thing that was ever negotiated by the time we got to the end. Sometimes I would put it on my forehead, and say, "We're going to deal with this issue at some point." I was very obnoxious, but it's the little things like that you remember.

Anyway, it was very difficult to do since I was the only planner and the transportation piece was already done. But there were many, many stumbling blocks and the environmental and natural resources were its major ones.

Larry Vognild negotiated that and he gets all the credit for there being any notable timber or natural resources issues in the bill at all because it started off as dead on arrival and ended up surprisingly strong for where we thought it was going to go originally. And he did that just by his knowledge and camaraderie with his Senate colleagues—he was able to pull that off.

As things went on, it became obvious that one of the biggest problems was going to be impact fees and how to deal with that in the totality of it. John Betrozoff and I had a separate conversation and decided that even though things were extremely difficult with the Democrats and Republicans in general, that we would get together and see if we could resolve that issue. And so we met outside the Conference Committee for maybe a week or so and asked people to give us any capital improvement programs that might exist. There were hardly any in the state of Washington because they were all voluntary. There were a couple from Bellevue and I think we had a total of six that people were able to round one up for us. We started looking at them, wondering—"What would be in a capital improvement program?" Today, now everybody knows what these things look like, but we invented the criteria. We looked at them, we said, "Oh we like this, it looks pretty good, let's put this in here." Then he and I figured out the impact fees and the whole thing finally came together and was accepted by the rest of the committee.

We then as a committee-of-the-whole interviewed select people. We brought them in and asked them questions. They had no idea why we were doing this because ordinarily when you testify in front of the Legislature you go in and tell the legislators what it is you want them to know. We would bring them in and

we would grill them, the six of us. We would ask all these questions and they'd leave looking sort of dazed—I don't know that for sure, I was not on the other side so I don't know how they felt.

Finally, we were finished and we were quite proud of ourselves. We had gotten through it, we thought somehow this was going to be okay and so we put it out for review and everybody, everybody to a person hated it. They absolutely thought it was the worst piece of legislation they'd ever seen in their lives.

So, we made a decision that we would listen to everyone from the point of view of making it practical because it was pretty clear that the philosophy had been laid out and was carved in stone. The philosophy was there, but we had to make it work on the ground. So we listened to everyone and rewrote the entire piece of legislation after that to incorporate as many of the practical things as possible.

There still is language from the original bill—the original Conference Committee bill that has things like “frequently flooded areas” and “walking to and from school” that you probably won't find in any other document in the country and never will because we made them up.

Rita: So now, the things that you spoke about then were compromises?

Busse: Absolutely.

Rita: To get it passed?

Busse: Yes. It was mostly how to make language work that dealt with the hang-ups people had that were less than the House bill. What specifically was the problem with the House bill—that was the standard we went from. And then how could language be modified to deal with those issues?

Rita: Anything else you'd like to tell us about the Conference Committee?

Busse: Maybe I'll come back to it. Right off the top of my head...

Diane Wiatr: Can you tell us the dates or the year?

Busse: 1990. There is one other thing about that. The growth hearings boards were not part of the original legislation and in part because of me. It was this local governance piece, the bottom-up approach and I really felt that tying that to any proposal that was out there for what the state's role was to be, was still too strong and wasn't going to work politically. After this session I ran for county commissioner in Clark County and was elected. So, I was done with the legislation. The following year they went back and put the growth hearings boards together, but even with that action, growth management still is not finished.

Rita: Just a minute, talk to us more about the 1991 amendments. What did you think of those and what do you think about the hearings boards and the work that they do?

Busse: Well, again I was opposed to having the state's role very strong at all. And I think the boards have really had a hard time of it. I think it's been extremely difficult for them. I think that the reason that it's been so hard is that when you're here as policymakers at the state level, you don't realize how difficult it is to politically implement laws locally. Of course, I had to implement it and I found that there are no tools in the toolbox for people locally to do any sort of tax relief or deal with the money issue and that's, of course, the driving force in all this. It's all about money and people's speculation on land. And there wasn't anything that could be used locally to ease the stress because the state didn't give permission. So, you had the growth boards with the hammer and there's no carrot out there at all. So, it's been 15 years of very, very tough times.

Rita: What is your most interesting memory of the enactment of the GMA? Is it the Conference Committee or something else?

Busse: Interesting?

Rita: Yes.

Busse: Well, I don't have one particularly interesting one. I mean, I have these various moments like the Post-It note [laughs]. They're just moments of how the thing went; it was very, very interesting.

Rita: How has the GMA evolved? What significant things has GMA done to achieve goals it was intended to achieve?

Busse: I think from the negative point of view, the worst thing that happened was the desire for people to spread this beyond the 12 counties that we put into it. And the money was eroded from the first group that was supposed to put plans together, the big counties—the Puget Sound growth core. The state—CTED people—decided to encourage the small communities to get involved and people wanted the money to do planning. People do want to do planning. That eroded what money that was there, making it extremely difficult for the rest of us to implement growth management to begin with. And that meant that it had a negative political impact on the state and for that reason it's been very, very difficult.

On the good side, it certainly has allowed communities to grow differently. It certainly changed the dynamics—it's made cities vital and has changed the role of the counties. It's been hard for many counties, but the cities did, until Tim Eyman came along, have many more resources to deal with growth and that's where it should have gone. So, there was an interesting change, there's no doubt about it. It's had a major, major impact on how we live in urban areas, I think in a very positive way. In the rural areas, I think it's done many things to preserve the good of our environment, but you probably could have done it less painfully.

Rita: So do you think the GMA has changed land use patterns and if so how?

Busse: I think that it's definitely focused growth more into the urban areas, and I think it has decreased the pressure on the rural areas and the ag areas to a certain extent. I think you have to look at it over a period of time and you can see that it has had some effect. I think it's caused people to think about all the parts. I think it's caused transportation to be an integral part of growth issues, and so I think we're seeing where we're putting the money in transportation. It's actually coordinated better than it was in the old days and it was the only thing that was coordinated at all prior to Growth Management. It was the only capital improvement plan that was around—the six-year roads plan was it. So, we have a history of trying to deal with roads, but it was just to build them and now I think we're trying to build them in places where they should accommodate a plan.

Tape 1, Side 2

Rita: We had a question about the five most important successes of the GMA. So you have mentioned that land use patterns have been changed. You talked about transportation, agriculture, and urban areas. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about in terms of successes?

Busse: Right of the top of my head it's not coming to me.

Rita: Okay, well, I think that was four.

Busse: Did I say there were five?

Rita: That was just my question.

Busse: Oh, that was your question?

Rita: You mentioned about four, so I thought, were there any others that you want to add?

Busse: No, because I can't think of one right now. It might come back to me, though.

Rita: Great. What do you think are the most important amendments that have been made to the GMA over the years?

Busse: I really don't know because I haven't paid that much specific attention to all the amendments. I don't think that there have been the kind of amendments there should have been. I think people have been very afraid to amend growth management. And I think the reason they've been afraid to is because it was this carefully crafted—and now you know it wasn't all that carefully crafted—but it was political compromise and people were afraid it would blow up and go away if you amended it. As a result I don't think it works as well as it should. So, the amendments I've seen to it have been just piecemeal, and I haven't seen anything that's been really substantial philosophically to correct any of the real problems out there.

Rita: How has the Growth Management Act shaped various communities? Give us some examples of how it's working well at the local level.

Busse: Well, I think the fact that there are now many, many cities—whereas before counties just grew wherever they had intersections—and now there's more of a sense of place. As much as people may not like to have the growth in a number of cities, I do think that people identify with places and to have something that's not an intersection, but to have a city that they can live in is very comforting to people. And I think that they like that. So, the rise of cities in the state of Washington is a reversal of a very long trend since World War II to spread growth throughout the county, and I think that is the significance of growth management.

Rita: What kind of pressure was there from the public to create a growth management strategy and what was the political climate back then?

Busse: Well, I was from Clark County and there was none. There was no political pressure to have the state involved in anything because of the Oregon experience. Oregon's land use plan is very top-down. The state of Oregon controls it and, of course, now, today, it's in serious trouble. But in Clark County, we had the Oregon refugees who did not like the Oregon way and were very vocal about it. So, from my point of view there was virtually no political pressure for me, representing the 49th District, which is urban Vancouver, to produce state growth management.

Statewide, I think King County was coming along and probably would have gotten a plan soon. They were very far along on what they were doing in 1990.

But Pierce County was a mess. They didn't want to do any planning; they never wanted to get around to it, thank you very much. They were sort of the poster child of a huge population area that just sort of turned up its nose at any kind of organization.

So, there was a lot of pressure in newspapers and so forth about, "Let's get a handle on this—this Puget Sound area is Pugelopolous and it's not having any sense of place." There was a lot of discussion of who are we and what's happening to our resources. So, in that regard, there was a lot of pressure for something to happen, but it was really pressure in the Puget Sound area. The negatives of growth management have been felt in the rest of the state and, of course, we're seeing politically the same kind of "us and them" political mentality that really got its foothold in growth management—the urban/rural split.

Rita: So, tell us about the opposition to the GMA. Why did people oppose it and how were they accommodated?

Busse: Well, they opposed it because people owned property and they felt that that is a right given to them just sort of like the right to bear arms controversy—is it in the constitution or is it not? Property is something in a democracy that is very, very important to people.

We have a very long history of home ownership and, people are pushed into home ownership, they want

home ownership; it's this American dream kind of thing. And it's very, very basic. The other basic need that's happened since World War II is owning a car and driving it wherever you want to. Homeownership and driving a car are symbolic of independence.

Then we have the history of our own state that shows that we're one of the last frontiers. People kept moving west and north and we were the last places settled in a lot of ways. So, a lot of our people couldn't go any further and still be in the country and so there's a history of people in our state who are extremely independent minded. The Local Governance Study Commission had done an extensive history and it pointed out this persnicketytiveness of the population and so the opposition to growth management is the opposition for anybody telling me what I can do to my property. That's a very, very, very fundamental "Who I am," kind of thing that you're getting when you're talking about this kind of regulation.

Then you add to that the kind of money that's involved with developers and property owners. There's a lot of money to be made and there's a lot of money to be lost.

The opposition was, "Don't change something I understand. I understand how I can go into my city hall or my county commissioners and we deal with a zone change and the kinds of plans they have. I understand that; don't change that relationship I have in my community. I don't want it to change because I may lose money, or I may lose property, and I don't understand the state's role in this, and I have a feeling that I no longer will be able to influence it on the local level in order to get what I want."

So, it was mostly fear of the unknown, fear of change, coupled with a very real fear that there were going to be losers in terms of value of property and nobody wanted to be on that end of things. And that's where, in my mind, where growth management is unfinished—in giving tools for government to deal with the winners and losers in terms of their investments. I don't think it's right for people to be zoned out of use of property. I think that there should be some kind of accommodation for many of the people.

Rita: What was the early process for early governments to begin their work under the Growth Management Act?

Busse: Well, the citizen participation part of growth management is one of the most challenging things. In Clark County, when I became commissioner, we got all the mayors together and sat down and said, "Now we've got to do this plan, and we've got to do it together." And there are several very, very small towns in Clark County and their ability to pay for this is extremely limited. But Clark County had also had a regional planning council for a long time so people were fairly used to working with each other.

So, we had a committee that worked for the three or four years it took to put the plan together and worked very, very closely on the plans to make sure that they were all coordinated. And in fact the county footed the lion's share of the bill for the small communities because we felt it was to the county's advantage to do that. And I'm going to use Clark County as an example because I was there, I was implementing it. I helped to write it, I helped to implement it. This is a very unusual thing to do.

There was a big fight with the City of Vancouver over annexation and it came down to a meeting just before the boundary review board was going to have a hearing on this huge annexation of the mall. And the problem was how the city is going to reimburse the county for the loss of our employees and so forth. It was one of those in-the-evening deals that was struck in a separate room. The mayor and the sheriff, and I as chair of the county commissioners, and a couple of key staff, sat there and figured it all out.

Rita: Because that was a huge annexation.

Busse: Huge annexation. Absolutely huge annexation and it changed Clark County, changed all the politics in Clark County. We were willing to do that because it was, in fact, the right thing to do. But we weren't going to do it for free—and, in fact, we worked it out and it became kind of a model later on for other people trying to transfer staff and so forth from the county... I was very close to that one. But I don't think that we were unusual in terms of the harmony that the Growth Management Act did cause in terms of citizen participation and working among all the jurisdictions. I know some communities had it easier than others.

Rita: Any other stories you would like to tell us from the early days after you were at the Legislature then were at the local level implementing the new law?

Busse: Well, immediately I had remorse. It was very difficult to implement, very difficult. And nobody knew what the words meant. We had to figure it out. All of a sudden there were all these lawyers involved in it who are reading these things [into the Growth Management Act]—it was appalling what the lawyers thought versus what those of us thought when we were actually writing the words. Although there were state goals, there were no standards. We didn't know what was acceptable, what wasn't, which way to go on things. I think in the end we had—in the adoption of the plan finally, in 1994 by the time we got there—the final iteration of it, I think we had over 20 public hearings between the planning commission and the board. So, we had a lot of input.

Rita: So, it was intense.

Busse: Very. Very.

Rita: So, we'd like to know from your point of view about CTED's role in terms of administering the Growth Management Act over the years. What are your views as a legislator, a local official, and then as director of the Office of Community Development?

Busse: Well, being the only person that's ever had in this state those three—author, implementer, and sort of the overseer from the state perspective with the money—it was very interesting. Originally I had a real problem, as I told you earlier, about giving away the money to the smaller communities. I really wish we could have done that in two phases.

I was critical of it at the time and I will always be critical of it. I just really felt that that was an implementation that went counter to where the legislators had come from, and eroded the money and so then nobody had enough money to really do it right. And I thought that was a very, very poor decision.

There is another point of view on that which is—however many communities, 22 out of 39 counties, or something like that—originally were planning, it has certainly resulted in a lot more plans in the state. And, of course, all the natural resources planning they've had to get done, statewide. They all had to deal with natural resources which was a really big deal and we felt at the time when we wrote the legislation that the natural resources component being required statewide would put all those communities kind of on hold because it really was a resource-saving piece of legislation.

Getting off the subject here, back to CTED. After that initial problem, CTED was very helpful because it was nice to have a clearinghouse when you were implementing the plan so you could easily know what other people were doing. So, anybody that was ahead of you or behind you, you knew it was going to be shared. You didn't have to completely be on your own and invent everything. So, it was good communication during the initial planning time and that was very helpful.

Rita: And the state gave a lot of money in the early days for guidebooks.

Busse: That was after we were inventing it. That was not the initial time because it took everybody a while to

get going so I don't think any guidebooks came out during the first couple of years. I mean they came out as soon as they could. The guidebooks eventually were very helpful.

Rita: So that was about 1992 and 1993.

Busse: Yeah, we were well on our way by then so they came out and they were helpful because then we had at least some idea of what the standards might be on a statewide basis, but we couldn't implement a plan before they came out. When the bill was enacted there was nothing and you just were sort of on your own. Then, over time I think that CTED became a good spot to continue that clearinghouse kind of idea for problems and possible amendments. I know when I was director of Community Development we had three or four pieces of legislation we tried to work that dealt with growth management issues. I think it's a very important function and helpful. And, of course, the distribution of money continues to be most important as well.

Rita: So, tell us more about what it was like to be the director of the Office of Community Development. And here you had worked on the passage of this legislation and then you had been a county commissioner and then you were in the Office of Community Development to administer it. I mean did you feel like that background helped you in terms of understanding CTED's role?

Busse: Oh, absolutely. Of course, I don't think Governor Locke would have appointed me to that position if I hadn't had the background because at that time he was trying split CTED and bring community development into a stronger position within state government. The legislation ultimately failed in the Legislature because of the cost involved in trying economic times. But for me to have the background I had in growth management was certainly very helpful for understanding what was going on in the communities and the challenges that people faced, but it also was fairly mature by that time.

Everybody's plans had basically been in and we were starting to talk about Round Two of plans. And we were trying to talk about how to deal with SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act) and changes there and how to integrate them. It was much more detailed in terms of the issues in the 2000 time frame instead of the 1990—in ten years—the GMA had its ten-year anniversary when I was here [at the Office of Community Development] and it was still controversial. But it was far more mature because most of the plans, at least, had been on the ground for a little bit.

Rita: In terms of how the GMA is structured, what do you think are the most important parts of the law?

Busse: Well, the philosophy that local communities should decide what local communities look like. I think it has been hard for people on the growth boards to truly understand what that means, and I still think it's essential for communities to be their own bosses. I think that that's important to the people. Again, back to that sense of place—"I live in a city, I live in a place that's unique and it's not the same as anyplace else." And I think it's very, very important and it's unfortunately played down. I think it's a very important philosophical position of the law.

I think the transportation piece is key. There's got to be money to make transportation work better, but I think that it's caused—even though they had the old six-year plans—an understanding of the interrelationships of the communities better. The roads don't stop at the city boundaries and really need to be developed in synch with growth. And it's caused some rethinking in many communities about how transportation is going to operate on that local level—not the big freeway pieces, but the subdivision and how they put stuff. I think that's been very important statewide.

I think unheralded is the dramatic plans that had to be drawn up for natural resources. Very, very

important for us to have fish and forests and all those things that we talk about now in terms of saving the salmon. But, actually, I think that the elements in natural resources, although they were compromised quite a bit to get them through, still are extremely important aspects that growth management really caused local governments to have to deal with. Before then, you didn't have to deal with the natural resources much—local entities had to deal with environmental impact statements when a development came along, but they really weren't forced to deal with big picture natural resource issues. They could just say, "Oh that's the state's job." That kind of got to be a local job as well and I think that's really important.

Rita: And you had them do that first.

Busse: Yes.

Tape 2, Side 1

Busse: ...so transportation and then impact fees. As controversial as those were, they put those in place in the only attempt to really fund locally. So, it continued to be controversial—really tied the schools in there which has been dramatically important in many communities to have school impact fees. And they've been basically the only ones that have used them. And then finally, the fact is that although growth management is divided into all these kind of sections, the overall idea of it is to require local governments to think about all of it. That is a tremendously important component of growth management—the fact that it doesn't work with just one piece. You have to have them all and they all have to balance and work together. That's very, very difficult and it just didn't exist before growth management in this state.

Rita: How do you view growth management today?

Busse: How do I view it?

Rita: Yes.

Busse: What do you mean, how do I view it?

Rita: Do you think that it's been a significant, important piece of legislation for the state of Washington? If we didn't have it, would we be sprawling more? What do you think?

Busse: I think it's a very significant piece of legislation because it's changed the structure of local government. It's changed the politics of the state—and not necessarily for the better from my perspective. It's caused communities to really think about themselves. I think that's extremely significant. So, although there are some negatives involved with it, I think overall it's been very positive and it's been much more far reaching than I ever thought it would be in terms of its impact. And I think if you took it away locally there would be people trying to figure out how to put it back in locally. I just think that it gives people a framework in which to make good, strong decisions and that was not necessarily available before. And one of the reasons I believe that is because of all the small communities that jumped in and wanted to do plans. People want to plan their communities, they really do. The question is, What's the structure of that planning and are the goals and are the pieces that you have to do or want to do the ones that work for each community? That's the argument. Well, most people think in a community that things are better if you plan them and then they get developed the way they were planned. So, I think it's been significant and I think it's been positive, but it's been painful as well.

Rita: If another state wanted to adopt a growth management law, what advice would you give them?

Busse: Well, when I was with Community Development, I was fortunate enough to be involved with the Lincoln Institute having the western states get together to talk about growth management. The institute is located within the Harvard campus complex and deals with economics, land and development, and so forth.

They had originally pulled together someone from each state east of the Mississippi to discuss land use, and that was very successful. So, then they decided, “Well, okay, that was easy, now we’ll get everyone west of the Mississippi together,” and they were quite surprised at how feisty we all were. So, California didn’t show up which we all thought was very interesting, but everybody else showed up. And I was really the only one from—there was somebody from Oregon, but I was the only one from the most populous state with growth management, since California wasn’t there. And everybody else that came really didn’t have any growth management; they had little pieces of it.

It was fascinating to listen to people in the Rocky Mountain states talking about how they were coping with the change in the economics, the retired were moving there, their communities were redeveloping as a result of that and how difficult it was to suddenly go from a no-growth kind of area into seeing a real change in their communities. And they really liked getting together to talk about what do we do now and where do we go. They were all interested in how they might get some kind of growth management in their state; and yet how that could work and how did ours work. And how we were able to do it and how did we deal with Eastern Washington—and for the Oregon people, how did they deal with Eastern Oregon, areas more like the Rocky Mountain states.

And so I had an opportunity to give other states advice about growth management and the advice was, and it will continue to be, to understand who your people are in the state, to inventory what your real problems are, to really understand the kind of goals that make sense for that population. And then talk to people and find out how to get them thinking from a goals point of view and how they might preserve the things that they want to preserve and what their fears are. Because the biggest thing with growth management is simply the fact that it’s change and people are afraid of change. So, the more conversations they have, the better it is, and the more easily that works.

But that makes me go back, way back, to the beginning—one of the things that was happening politically when growth management came along is that the environmental community had an initiative out there. A lot of people really thought that that would pass and in some regards that would have been a lot easier if that had passed because the state Legislature doesn’t ever mess with initiatives. Once they get adopted they think they’re carved in stone. But the problem with it that we had was that growth management is so complicated that it would be difficult for the whole initiative to fit on that one piece of paper that was a requirement for initiatives at that time. Growth management is far more complicated than what could be in an initiative and truly make it work.

So, in that regard, you really want to keep states away from doing that kind of growth management, because I think it’s far more complicated than what an initiative allows. So, I think it requires—other states, if they were interested in growth management—a lot of conversations and a lot of understanding about the culture that they have and what truly their goals would be and to take it a little bit more slowly unless, of course, they had the opportunity politically to move fast.

Rita: Do you have any other topics that you’d like to talk about or any other comments about growth management or how it was adopted or anything along the way?

Busse: Well, you’ve let me answer questions any way I wanted to so I had an opportunity to ramble quite a bit [laughs]. I think we’ve hit my recollection. I mean there were many, many players involved in the totality of it, but for me it was very small. I didn’t really have anything to do with the growth strategies piece.

I attended a couple of their meetings as they were philosophizing, but when the legislators got a hold of it, in typical legislative fashion, we just ignored everybody else and just did whatever we thought would get out of the session.

There was a lot of work by a lot of different people to try to make it work. The various associations and lobbying groups, as I said, when we all came out of conference that they all hated it; we really worked hard in refining it, making it kind of an extremely messy process at the end. But we ended up being very open to it because it was a hard bill to put together. And you really weren't sure how it was going to really work together so you needed fresh eyes to look at the language and see what it was. So, it's an interest to me, but it's been 15 years and at some point, I think that we should just accept that—that it's here and it's working and it needs to have some additional pieces in terms of moving money around, but basically nothing significant has been discovered that is wrong with it. So, I think that it is lacking in major negatives and that means its just part of our culture now. It's just part of who we are and we need to accept it, whether it's not strong enough for some or too strong for others, it is working.

(Break in tape)

Busse: So, your question is about how many task forces and efforts that were related in the history of legislation and efforts to get to where we are. I'm going to go way back to 1967 because I always over-answer questions like this [laughter].

In 1967 landmark legislation was passed that established boundary review boards in the state and that was the first time that anybody had thought to ask questions before annexations occurred. It was very, very significant and, of course, they still exist and still function very nicely and have had a quite interesting role as cities became more important after growth management.

So, you have to go back to 1967. Prior to 1967, there's really nothing other than the transportation issues that ever dealt with growth. There was hardly anything about subdivisions until about that time, so it was very, very unregulated in terms of development.

The next time there was anything really significant was really 1988 when the Local Governance Study Commission completed its work. So, the Local Governance Study Commission basically has the philosophy of growth management. What came out of that was a good strong history written by the staff which came from Evergreen [State College] and it was research—there was a big poll done by WSU [Washington State University] about people's viewpoints on local and state governments. That's a very interesting publication that really gives direction and gave legislators the direction for what the public was thinking and what the "art of the possible" was when growth management came along.

Growth Strategies [Commission] was passed in 1989 as a part of the budget, and that was Joe King's first attempt to deal with growth management—it was a task force basically to look at what do we need to do in order to get ready for growth management. That just got started when suddenly the politics was right for doing growth management itself, and the opportunity presented itself and this initiative from the environmental groups was gaining momentum.

So the Legislature, the House—run by Democrats at the time—saw it was a political opportunity to just burst ahead. So Growth Strategies was still meeting and doing its thing from a task force point of view, and we just blasted ahead with creating legislation in the House. Joe King talked with Jeannette Hayner who was the Republican leader in the Senate and they agreed there'd be a bill. So, when the House version was done and the

way it works is the Senate should have a version and then you go to Conference Committee. I don't remember if they had anything other than the title of the bill or something, but they had enough to get us into conference.

So then, with any legislation, what happens if you disagree, the work then turns to the Conference Committee and you can start all over again. You come out with something brand new, which is in fact what we did and then that was amended when it came out through the public process of, "Oh my gosh, what did you do"—so we amended it one more time and came out with the final conference report, which was adopted by both the House and the Senate. So, that was the original [HB] 2929 bill of 1990, growth management. Growth Strategies continued on their work, as I recall, and then the following year—although I was gone and now implementing things in Clark County—the Legislature came back and did sort of a mop-up and did the growth boards and that was the major part of that 1991 bill.

Diane: Growth hearings boards.

Busse: Growth hearings boards, yes. So, does that tie all those pieces together?

Diane: Thank you.